

TV dial is almost done spinning

With an NBC-Fox affiliation switch set for Aug. 28, the most volatile period in Green Bay television seems to be drawing to a close.

Network switches and station sales have been in vogue.

Every commercial station has seen some kind of upheaval in the past 3½ years.

Let's do a quick recap:

- **WBAY, Channel 2:** In 1992, the station ended its 39-year association with CBS when CBS Inc. bought WFRV, Channel 5. WBAY became an ABC affiliate.

Last year, WBAY was sold by Nationwide Communications to Young Broadcasting.

Status: The station is in the first year of a 10-year contract with ABC.

- **WFRV, Channel 5:** In 1992, the station was sold by Midwest Communications to CBS. The purchase forced an end to ABC ties.

As a network-owned station, WFRV was not a player in recent maneuvering in the market.

Status: Unchanged. It has a contract with CBS for as long as it is owned by the network.

- **WLUK, Channel 11:** In 1994, Burnham Broadcasting announced it intended to sell the station to a partnership that included the Fox network. Soon, the station was part of a



Warren Gerds
Critic-at-large

clamor about foreign ownership and other rules.

Months of high-level debate — in which Channel 11 had no direct part — essentially ended when the sale to SF Broadcasting went through April 28. That meant the station would become a Fox station.

Status: Until Aug. 27, an NBC affiliate. As of Aug. 28, a Fox affiliate.

However, because Fox has financial interest in SF Broadcasting, WLUK could be considered more than an average affiliate carrying a network's programs.

- **WGBA, Channel 26:** Following the financial failure of the original Channel 32 in 1992, WGBA took over as the Fox affiliate.

Owned by Aries Telecommunications, Channel 26 got a boost when Fox grabbed the National Football Conference package (including most Green Bay Packers telecasts) away from CBS.

Status: Until Aug. 27, the Fox affiliate. As of Aug. 28, the NBC station. WGBA's new contract is for 10 years.

- **WXGZ, Channel 32:** Five years with the Fox network ended in 1992, when the station went bankrupt.

A new owner, Ace TV, brought the station back 28 months later under special rules that allow it to operate under Channel 26's roof.

Status: WXGZ is in the first year of a multiyear agreement with the fledgling United Paramount Network.

Ahead, viewers face a period of adjustment to get used to two more networks on different channels, as well as a surge in newscasts on both stations.

Then maybe the dust will settle. Maybe.

"This market should be fairly impervious to future changes," said Matt Kreiner, Channel 11 president and general manager. "But you know what? As soon as you say that, something will come up to change it all again."

"Given today's entertainment world, I wouldn't rule out any potential change. Every one you thought wouldn't happen has happened as you look over the recent years."

Warren Gerds writes about television for the Press-Gazette. Write to him at P.O. Box 19430, Green Bay, WI 54307-9430.